

12/15/65

A TIGER TO RIDE

Chapter I

Every incoming national administration inherits a multitude of problems from its predecessors. This is inevitable because life itself government, like ~~people~~, is never without problems. These are attended as they arise, ignored in the hope that they will quietly disappear, or allowed to age and mature like an unpunctured boil whose infection does not spread or a festering splinter removed by the fluid surrounding it. Each administration has some trouble which it makes for itself by its own errors, inadvertencies, or misjudgments, or which are made for it by its political and international adversaries, or are part of the normal processes of national and international life. These trouble are multitudinous and ~~next~~ vary from pinpricks, like who should be the new postmaster in Sacramento, to enormous complications unlike any of the pre-nuclear age.

The Kennedy administration alone inherited a problem made insoluble for it by the preceding Eisenhower administration. This problem was that of Cuba. The Eisenhower administration needlessly ~~and~~ inflated it beyond all reason into one of the utmost seriousness with and hazard. It then, ~~with~~ almost its dying gasp, broke relations with

the Cuban Castro government.

When the Kennedy rocker was moved into the Oval Room, there was an unseen cadaver standing behind it, waiting to lay the cold hand of death on the new President's shoulder. That one administration ^{would} ~~has~~ so hogtie its successor, allowing it no room for movement and no alternative action, is entirely without precedent in our national history. It is both normal and proper, once an election has been held, for the ending administration to reserve for its successor all necessary rights and options so that each President may administer his government and solve his problems in his own way. Only what is unavoidable is addressed by the lame-duck administration. What does not require attention is not attended. There was nothing in the worsening relations between the United States and Cuba that impelled the breaking of relations on _____, 196_. There was no imminent danger of war; there was, in fact, little or nothing the Cuban government could do that could, in any significant way, affect the United States or its relations with other countries. ^{That} ~~At~~ the Eisenhower administration would, under these circumstances, take such a unique and entirely unprecedented action cannot be regarded as accidental and must be considered to have

had the intention of perpetuating its own mistakes and policies in the new administration.

Had he wanted to pursue a different policy, John F. Kennedy could not, at least immediately, have done so. The political consequences of such an abrupt policy change in both national and international politics is almost beyond measure. Kennedy was a minority President, selected by a hair-breadth margin in an election in which his unsuccessful opponent was voted for by more Americans than had ever before preferred even a successful candidate. Kennedy was the youngest President in our history, and he took office, inhibited by his youth, the narrowness of his margin, and a tense international situation in a changing world and fraught with dangers unique in history.

Besides what he read in the papers, what he had learned in the Congress, or what he and his advisers concluded based upon their knowledge, the new President was privy to only what the outgoing administration had imparted. Even had he intended to be as fully informative as possible, President Eisenhower and a few of his top aides could not have done so for the dirty-trick department of the Central Intelligence Agency was making its own foreign policy and, in its own

way, was precluding change/in it.

This reached its natural and preordained conclusion in the disaster of the Bay of Pigs. With this disaster and the concomitant liability in at least the domestic political situation, the new administration was launched. Dirtier partisan politics we had never seen. They were just as clever, too. For there was nothing Kennedy could do about it. He dared not raise his voice in opposition because he had no way of knowing what lay behind the ruptured relations. Politically, it was not possible for him to say anything that might be construed as in any way in favor of Castro.

The ultimate consequences of this single final act of the Eisenhower administration is as unique in domestic policy as it was in foreign affairs. Further, it created a condition in which a single mistake by the inexperienced and incompletely informed Kennedy administration could, by accident or ignorance, set the world aflame. It This did ~~could~~ not happen, but it could have and it almost did. One false step and the world would have been incinerated.